

Italian pseudo-echo questions at the interface

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1. INTRODUCTION

We aim at providing a unified account of the prosodic, syntactic and semantic properties of pseudo-echo questions (1) in comparison to their *wh*-question counterparts (2).

[Context A]

Gianni ha detto che in Cina ha mangiato cavallette.
'Gianni said that in China he ate grasshoppers.'

- (1) Cosa ha mangiato? [PEQ]
what AUX eaten
'What did he eat?'

[Context B]

Gianni ieri è andato al ristorante cinese.
'Gianni yesterday went to the Chinese restaurant.'

- (2) Cosa ha mangiato? [WhQ]
what AUX eaten
'What did he eat?'

2. PROSODY

QUESTION: What is the prosody of PEQs and is it different from the prosody of WhQs?

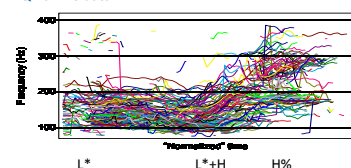
STIMULI: Two types of contexts (A/B), three *wh*-words (*cosa* 'what', *come* 'how', *quanto* 'how much') and three sets of seven verbs resulted in 42 targets.

PARTICIPANTS: 10 monolingual native speakers of Standard Italian coming from the area of Veneto.

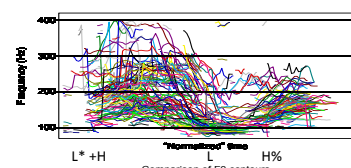
DATA: We obtained 420 stimuli in total. Some stimuli were excluded due to slips of the tongue. We further analyzed 188 stimuli of WhQ (89.52%) and 148 stimuli of PEQ (70.47%).

3. Frequency (F0)

PEQ: raw F0 data. Comparison of F0 contours



WhQ: raw F0 data. Comparison of F0 contours

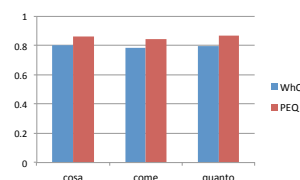


H% in 59.04%.

L% in 40.96%.

4. Duration

RESULTS: The mean sentence duration of PEQ is significantly longer than the mean sentence duration of WhQ.



Cosa.WhQ - PEQ	Paired t(56) = - 2.596, p = 0.012
Come.WhQ - PEQ	Paired t (48) = - 2.529, p = 0.015
Quanto.WhQ - PEQ	Paired t(41) = - 2.739, p = 0.009

5. SYNTACTIC & PRAGMATIC PROPERTIES

- 1) Speech Act adverb: *semplicemente* 'simply' (Cinque 1999) can be followed by a little pause in a WhQs, but not in PEQs:

Semplicemente, cosa gli hai detto? [WhQ]
Simply, what did you tell him?

Semplicemente, cosa gli hai detto? [PEQ]
Simply what did you tell him?

✓ *Semplicemente cosa gli hai detto?* (no pause) [PEQ]
Simply what did you tell him?

- 2) Right dislocation: WhQs can be separated from the right dislocation by a little pause, while PEQs cannot:

A chi l'ha mandata, la lettera? [WhQ]
To whom did he send, the letter?

A chi l'ha mandata, la lettera? [PEQ]
To whom did he send, the letter?

✓ *A chi l'ha mandata la lettera?* (no pause) [PEQ]
To whom did you send the letter?

- 3) *Semplicemente* 'simply' cannot be inserted out of the blue in a PEQ. It must have been mentioned in the previous sentence. In the following example the adverb is pragmatically licensed but is not compatible with a PEQ:

A: *Ieri io, Gianni e Maria abbiamo fatto tante cose. Siamo andati a fare shopping, poi abbiamo bevuto un aperitivo, poi siamo andati al ristorante dove abbiamo mangiato salvia frita e bevuto vino rosso.*
'Yesterday Gianni, Maria and I did a lot of things. We did shopping, then we had a drink, then we went to a restaurant where we ate fried sage and drank red wine.'

B: # *Eh? Semplicemente cosa avete mangiato?*
Eh? Simply what did you eat?

The pragmatic interpretation of the PEQ seems to correspond to the pragmatics of Frascarelli & Hinterhölzl (2007) *Familiar Topic*: the elements that form the PEQ are mandatorily mentioned in the previous context.

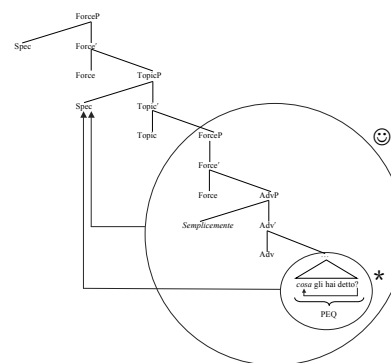
6. SYNTACTIC structure of PEQs

We propose that a PEQ moves as a whole to the TopicP in a higher ForceP.

We argue that CP is recursive à la Krifka (2012:23).

The PEQ merged as a regular WhQ in the first CP (first speech act) and then moves as a Topic to the higher CP (the second speech act).

With a PEQ we do not ask for information, but we ask for the repetition of a sentence, something that has been previously mentioned in the context.



6. SEMANTIC PROPERTIES

PEQs as metalinguistic speech-acts

We analyze PEQs as metalinguistic speech-acts. The reasons are the following:

- 1) Adverbs are licensed only when repeated from the sentence that is interrogated, as shown in the following example.

A: *Sfortunatamente, Gianni ha mangiato cavallette.*
Unluckily, Gianni ate grasshoppers.
B: *Sfortunatamente cosa ha mangiato Gianni?*
Unluckily what did Gianni eat?

- 2) Speech-act adverbs, such as *francamente* 'frankly' take scope below the speech-act. Compare the WhQ with the PEQ:

Francamente, cosa ha mangiato Gianni? [WhQ]
Frankly, what did Gianni eat?

Francamente cosa ha mangiato Gianni? [PEQ]
Frankly what did Gianni eat?

The WhQ roughly means "be frank in asserting a sentence of the form 'Gianni ate x'", whereas the PEQ means "assert a sentence of the form 'Frankly, Gianni ate x'".

SEMANTIC PROPERTIES

- 3) PEQs are not associated with the canonical existential presupposition of WhQs.

As demonstrated by Reis (1991), the PEQ *cosa ha mangiato Gianni?* 'what did Gianni eat?' does not presuppose that Gianni ate something; rather, it presupposes that *speaker said that Gianni ate something*.

Krifka (2012) introduces the idea that Force can be recursive and movement to a second Force layer encodes a meta-linguistic speech-act. Within this framework, Krifka accounts for a number of facts including such as declarative questions and negated polarity questions. For example the question *Is there a vegetarian restaurant?* can be analyzed as follows:

LF: $[-_{\text{ForceP}} I_S, [-_{\text{ForceP}} t_i, [_{\text{IP}} \text{there } t_i \text{ a vegetarian restaurant }]]]$

Interpretation: REQUEST(ASSThere is a veg. rest.) \vee ASS(\sim there is a veg. rest.)

Meaning: the speaker requests the addressee to make an assertion of the form "There is a vegetarian restaurant" or an assertion of the form "there is no vegetarian restaurant".

Within this framework, the cases of *denegation* of a question (Ladd 1981), such as *Isn't there a vegetarian restaurant?*, are cases in which the negation takes scope over the ASSERTION operator but below the REQUEST operator. This explains why these instances of negation are always clitic and do not license NPIs.

Encoding metalinguistic speech-act

In PEQs movement to the highest Force of the sentence encodes a metalinguistic speech-act.

LF: $[-_{\text{ForceP}} [_{\text{ForceP}} [\text{Frankly what did Gianni ate}], [-_{\text{ForceP}} t_i]]]]$

Interpretation REQUEST(ASST(Frankly Gianni ate a) \vee ASS(Frankly Gianni ate b) \vee ...)

Meaning: the speaker requests the addressee to make an assertion of the form "Frankly Gianni ate a" or an assertion of the form "Frankly Gianni ate b" or ...

Further evidence:

The activation of the REQUEST operator is always associated with a rising intonation (Truckenbrodt (in press). As shown by our production data, PEQs are consistently associated with a rising intonation.

8. CONCLUSIONS

- The melodies of PEQ and WHQ differ in pitch accent and in some cases in boundary tone: L* L*+H -H% vs. L*+H L- H% or L%.
- PEQ is different from WHQ with respect to duration. The mean sentence duration of PEQ is significantly longer than the mean sentence duration of WHQ.
- The syntax of PEQs is different from the syntax of WhQs.
- We assume that PEQ is a Familiar Topic and we argue that PEQ moves as a topic of a higher ForceP
- PEQs are meta-linguistic speech-acts, as shown by the licensing and interpretation of adverbs and by their presuppositional properties;
- The meta-linguistic nature of PEQs correlate with syntactic movement of the sentence to a higher recursive Force projection and with their raising intonation, in line with the framework proposed by Krifka (2012).

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